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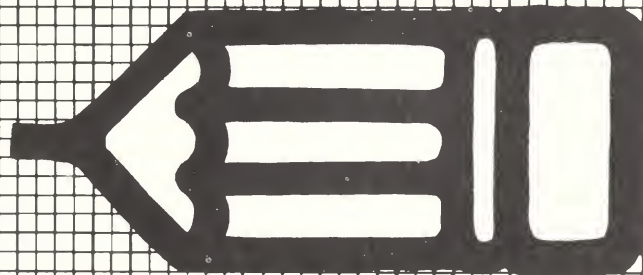
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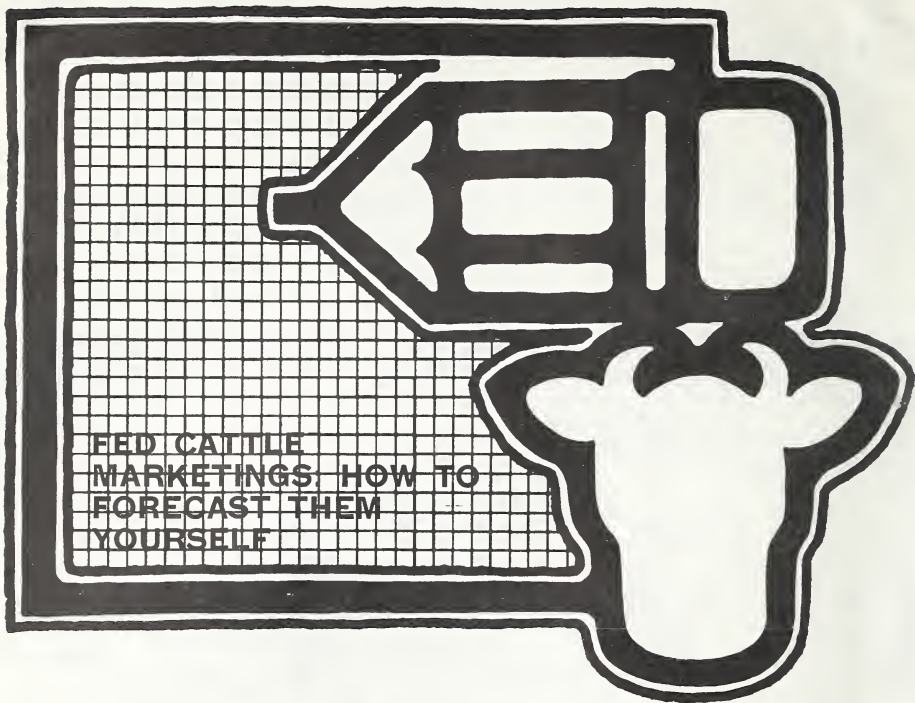
the crop reporters magazine

U.S. Department of Agriculture Statistical Reporting Service August 1972

56/7

Fed Cattle Marketings: How to Forecast Them Yourself





With a pencil and SRS' quarterly Cattle on Feed reports, any cattle feeder in the Nation can make his own ballpark projection of cattle marketings in the coming months, according to Economist Donald Seaborg who looks after the livestock situation for USDA's Economic Research Service. In this article, based on an interview with Seaborg, we'll show you how to take the July Cattle on Feed report and use it to gage market supplies during July–September and October–December.

Start With the Summary But Don't Stop With It

The bulk of the Nation's beef supply—about 75 percent—comes from fed cattle produced in feedlots. Thus, potential supplies of fed cattle, more than any other single factor, help determine cattle prices in the short run.

All of SRS' quarterly Cattle on Feed reports show the number of animals currently on feed, placements, and

marketings for 23 major cattle feeding States. There's also a breakdown by weight groups and an indication of how many cattle producers plan to market in the coming months.

The quarterly reports are the major data sources for forecasters in government and industry who project cattle marketings as much as 6 months in the future.

The summary pages of the July Cattle on Feed report will give you a feel for the national and regional supply situations in the cattle industry—but you've got to go beyond the written information to the tabular data to do your own forecasting.

Plus and Plot

One of the many approaches to estimating future cattle marketings involves some easy addition of data in the Cattle on Feed reports and some simple plotting on the charts shown on page 4. These charts, developed by Seaborg and other USDA researchers, show the relationships between the number of cattle on feed July 1 and

the number of cattle marketed in July–September and during October–December.

All of the arithmetic maneuvers involved in forecasting *are* simple, so please don't hesitate to try.

July–September marketings rest mainly on the number of heavy cattle on feed July 1: steers over 900 pounds and heifers over 700 pounds.

Economists use a rule of thumb that cattle gain about 80 pounds a month. At this rate of gain, you can pretty much figure that the cattle in these weights will reach the standard marketing weight of somewhat over 1,100 pounds per head for steers and about 950 pounds for heifers sometime during July–September.

Therefore, to forecast marketings in the third quarter, all you have to do is add up the number of steers in the 900+ pound group and the number of heifers in the 700+ pound category. The data will be in the July Cattle on Feed report.

Next pinpoint this total on the horizontal grid at the bottom of the July–September marketings chart. From there measure the distance to the diagonal line and you can easily read off the probable level of July–September marketings.

Here's an illustration:

Suppose on July 1 there were 2.7 million steers weighing over 900 pounds and 2 million heifers weighing more than 700 pounds. Your combined total would be 4.7 million head which you would pinpoint on the horizontal line indicating the number of steers and heifers on feed. From that point, draw a straight line up to the diagonal and read off the forecasted level of marketings. You should get between 6.5 and 6.7 million head.

You can forecast October–December marketings in exactly the same way—except that the weight classes to be totaled are 700–900 pounds for steers and 500–700 pounds for heifers. Also, do your plotting on the charts on the far right, which relate to fourth quarter supplies.

The All-Important Judgment Factor

You can see that the charts on the following page also include numbers and dots above and below the diagonal line. These indicate years in the past decade when marketings in the July–September and October–December quarters deviated from their hypothetical norms. The distances the dots are from the lines show how marked the deviations were.

There's usually a logical explanation for each variation—or more likely several explanations.

Maybe in one year the pace of marketings varied because of weather extremes. Maybe another time high prices tempted producers to sell their cattle early at lighter weights. Maybe very large placements on feed during the spring and early summer made for a departure from the usual marketing pattern.

Judgment plays a part in every forecast—and when plotting your charts you may want to adjust your forecast up or down depending on what you think prices or placements might do to marketings in coming months.

High prices usually encourage producers to market at lighter weights, indicating there might be a heavier-than-usual marketing pattern.

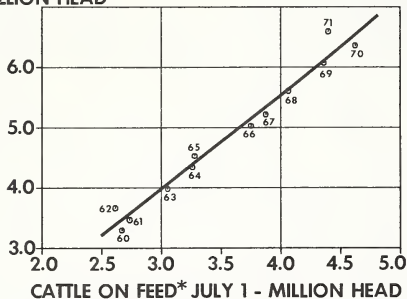
Conversely, in a period of declining prices, feeders tend to hold cattle a little longer in hopes prices will get a little better. The upshot is usually an increase in average cattle weights and perhaps lighter-than-normal marketings in one particular quarter. But keep in mind, cattle delayed in one quarter will come up for sale sometime—and you can expect larger supplies to hit the market later on.

Placements on feed at the current time will have only a minor impact on summer marketings but a fairly major effect on fourth quarter supplies. Thus, if summer placements look extremely large to you, you might want to adjust your October–December forecast upward from the diagonal line that indicates average marketings.

CATTLE AND CALVES ON FEED JULY 1 AND JULY-SEPTEMBER MARKETINGS

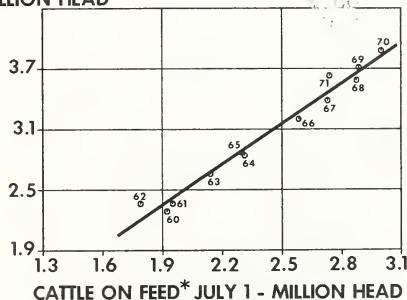
23 MAJOR FEEDING STATES

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MILLION HEAD



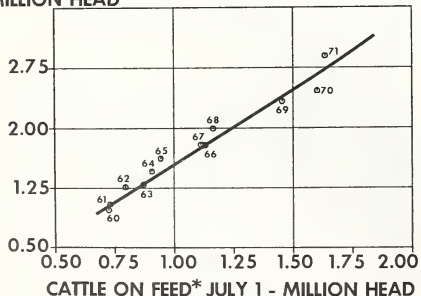
CORN BELT STATES

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WESTERN STATES

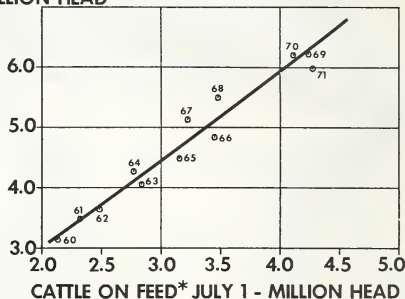
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CATTLE AND CALVES ON FEED JULY 1 AND OCTOBER-DECEMBER MARKETINGS

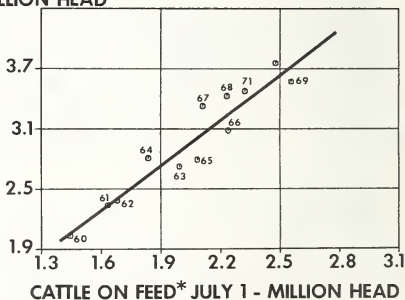
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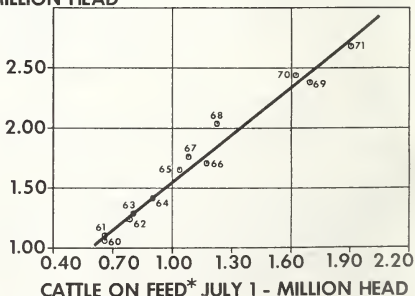
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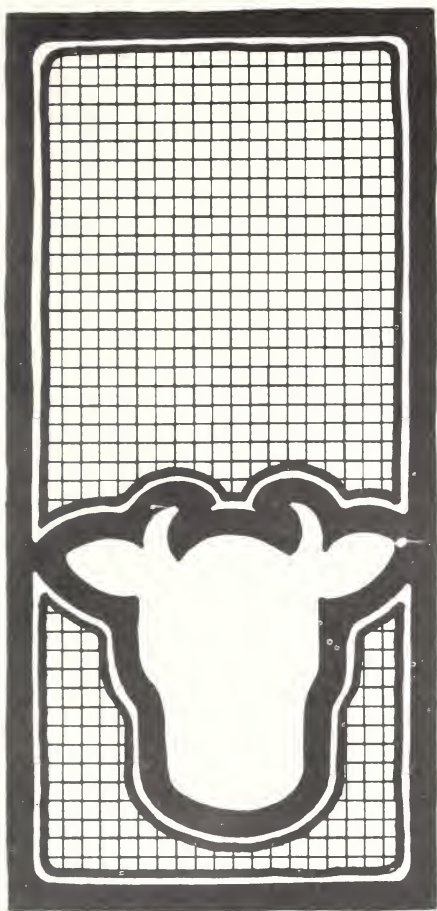


WESTERN STATES

MARKETINGS-
MILLION HEAD



*STEERS OVER 900 LBS. AND HEIFERS OVER 700 LBS.



Intentions—And How You Should Weigh Them

The quarterly Cattle on Feed report always includes a paragraph on what farmer feeders and cattlemen say they're going to do in the way of marketings in the coming quarter.

While generally these intentions are a pretty good indicator of supplies in the next 3 months, every farmer can make his own forecast to see if what farmers are saying dovetails with what they are doing.

For example, let's suppose producers say they will up marketings this summer 5 percent over a year earlier. You should check farmers' marketing intentions against what they're feeding.

If it turns out there are 10 percent more cattle on feed in the weight groups due to come to market during July–September, you might well conclude marketings will be up more than the 5 percent indicated by producers—that is, unless you figure producers are going to feed to heavier and heavier weights.

Always remember, the intentions report reflects industry conditions at one point in time. Should these conditions change, producers might alter their marketing plans dramatically. If you do your own forecasting of supplies, you might be able to anticipate some of these alterations.

Review the Regions

On occasion—on a rare occasion—cattle feeders in all parts of the country are doing the same thing. But usually there are regional variations that are going to mean different marketing pressures will be felt by feeders in different parts of the country.

You should always forecast cattle marketings in your own region and weigh them against what's going on elsewhere. For example, if there's a big strong run of cattle out of one region for a couple of months, it's bound to affect prices in that region more than in other markets.

How Forecasting Can Work for You

With just the little bit of garden-variety arithmetic described in this article, any farmer can get a pretty good perspective on the cattle supply situation in coming months. And this may help you time your own marketings to get the very best possible price advantage.

For instance, say you foresee a big boost in marketings in the near future and you've got cattle nearing market weight. You might want to move them to market before the crowd gets there and prices sag.

It's also a sure thing that the better your knowledge is of the overall cattle supply situation, the better your bargaining position is going to be vis-a-vis the guy who buys your cattle.



SPOTLIGHT ON ALABAMA

"Add our 2,000 miles of navigable river waterways to our 81,000 farms, and you can see that Alabama's a State with a bright future in international trade," says George B. Strong, statistician in charge of SRS's Crop and Livestock Reporting Service at Montgomery.

"Last year, the Port of Mobile sent 8.8 million bushels of soybeans to foreign lands. While that totals only 2 percent of soybean exports nationally, it amounted to half our State's crop . . . and the soybean business promises to get even better in years to come."

Alabama soybeans have certainly come a long way since 1960, when the State produced only 3.2 million bushels, worth \$6.6 million. Then, three-fifths of the State's crop grew in Baldwin County, just east of Mobile.

"Foreign buyers were always attracted to our soybeans, because transportation costs were cheap. Even now, exporters pay about 12¢ per ton less here than the national average," continues Strong.

Last year Baldwin County produced 3.0 million bushels of soybeans, around 17 percent of Alabama's 17.5-million-bushel crop.

"That's where you have to take our excellent waterway system into account," remarks Strong. "Alabama has more miles of navigable waterways than any other State.

"Farmers in the lower two-thirds of the State can move their products to market by barge or boat, realizing big savings over truck or train transporta-

tion. And we've got a big push on to build more ultramodern elevators on our rivers—which is encouraging soybean production inland.

"In 1965, Alabama built its first inland elevator at Demopolis, 125 miles north of Mobile on the Tombigbee River. That year, the four counties around Demopolis produced roughly 42,000 bushels of soybeans. By 1968, their production jumped to almost 1.5 million bushels, and last year, that area produced 1.9 million bushels.

"Additional elevators are now in operation at Claiborne, Columbia, Phenix City, Selma, and Tuscaloosa, and one is scheduled to open at Montgomery in time to handle this year's soybean crop.

"The Alabama agricultural story during the past decade or so also concerns our shift from a crop to a livestock State," emphasizes Strong.

Before 1957, a year when considerable cotton acreage was placed in the soil bank, cash receipts from crops always exceeded those from livestock and poultry.

During the early 1960's, however, the livestock-poultry sector earned Alabama farmers 60 percent of their money, and the proportion had risen to 70 percent as the decade ended. Last year, which was an unusually good crop year, cash receipts from farm marketings totaled \$803.0 million, with \$523.6 of that coming from the livestock sector.

Poultry is now Alabama's largest agricultural industry and the State

turns out almost 1.5 million broilers each working day. That adds up to 384.3 million birds, earning Alabama chicken farmers \$169.5 million in gross returns in 1971, 21 percent of Alabama cash receipts. Broiler production topped previous highs last year—in fact the Alabama broiler business has established new production records every year since 1947.

"In our State, the egg comes second, as far as poultry income is concerned," muses Strong. "The 2.8 billion eggs laid in 1971 by Alabama hens earned poultry operators \$83.9 million."

The poultry industry in Alabama consists mainly of large integrated operations. The broiler industry is totally integrated; five-sixths of the layers in flocks producing commercial eggs for the table belong to such operations.

Cattle rank second in earning power for Alabama farmers, worth \$160.7 million in 1971. Most Alabama cattlemen run cow-calf operations, where calves are sold as feeder animals. Temperatures and humidity are not favorable for maximum gains in Alabama, so most Alabama calves are bought by out-of-State feeders.

"Rounding out our livestock industry are hogs, earning 7 percent of receipts in 1971, and dairy production, which also accounted for 7 percent," says Strong.

Both swine and dairy production have followed the national trend—concentration of production into fewer but larger operations.

"Now," digresses Strong, "we've talked about the soybean expansion, our newest development, and about livestock and poultry, our leading enterprises of the last decade. But no story of the Cotton State would be complete without mentioning our most valuable crop, obviously cotton.

"Over the past decade, cotton production moved into northern Alabama where mechanized harvest and modern production methods are used. The small cotton farm that relies on hand labor is fading into the past."

Last year, lint cotton returned more to Alabama farmers than any other crop—\$88.8 million. Cottonseed added to the crop's value by bringing in an additional \$13.1 million—helping cotton account for 13 percent of farm income.



☐ Home on the range in the Heart of Dixie: The calves will probably be sold at the big Montgomery market to out-of-State buyers. Alabama weather does not favor maximum gains in feedlots.

☐ Port of Mobile officials inspect a barge that has just brought a crop from upriver to be shipped abroad. Foreign trade is one of the fastest growing aspects of Alabama agriculture.

THE LIGHTS are purposefully dim, shaded by amber-colored filters that mask color differences in the foods to be sampled.

Against one wall of the room are partitions creating five booths. A person is in each booth, perched on a high stool with his or her back turned to casual observers.

As we watch, one of the testers lifts a small white paper cup marked with a numeral. He drains its contents slowly, then places the empty cup in a pass-through to an unseen kitchen.

A score sheet lies before him and he marks it deliberately, pausing occasionally in his answers.

As the man writes, the pass-through is noiselessly lowered and then raised again. The empty cup has been exchanged for an unsalted wafer the man is to eat to clear his palate. There's also water provided with which he may rinse his mouth.

When he's finally ready to test another sample, the man lowers the pass-through as a signal.

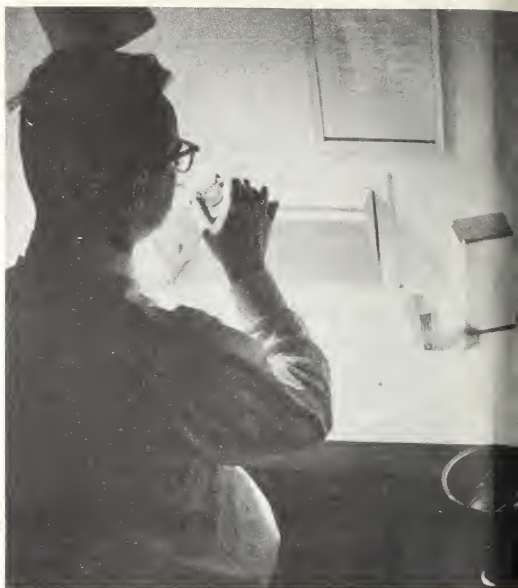
On this carefully structured little scene, enacted in SRS' sensory evaluation laboratory in Washington, D.C., hangs the fate of one of the countless new foods developed by USDA's utilization research laboratories.

The test in the SRS lab marks the new food's debut with consumers—and will determine whether it has any appeal or must go back to the drawing board for further refinement.

SRS' Special Surveys Branch is charged with conducting much of USDA's work on consumer opinions and attitudes. This group of social scientists gives the consumer a chance to say what he or she thinks about a given food or fiber.

Such research gets the word back to the producer and takes some of the guesswork out of the hazardous business of marketing farm products.

Taste tests are only one of several types of opinion research conducted by





SRS TASTE TESTS: Survival Course for New Foods

Top: In the test lab itself separate booths, special lighting, pass-throughs to the kitchen are all part of the environmental controls that help keep test reactions free of extraneous influences. **Bottom:** SRS lab technicians stand ready to pass test samples, waters, and evaluation forms from the kitchen to participants in the adjoining testing room.

SRS—but they're an all-important phase in new product development. In recent years many of the tests have involved citrus or dairy products. However, meat items such as frankfurters have come under occasional scrutiny.

The SRS tests can be structured to measure a wide range of consumer reactions to differences in such food characteristics as flavor, sweetness, texture, or even the product's storage life on the shelf. They can also be tailored to apply to grade standards and marketing problems, as well as product development or product improvement efforts.

While most of the products to be sampled are submitted by USDA's utilization labs, State colleges and universities may also request that one of their products be run through the sensory evaluation laboratory.

And there are times when farm associations, too—dairy men, citrus growers, livestock producers—want USDA to make an objective, unbiased test of their product's consumer appeal.

When such a group does ask for a study of one of their products, they usually help pay for part of the work.

None of the people who actually do the sampling for SRS are in any way trained testers, nor are they even screened for taste sensitivity. Rather, all are USDA staffers picked from a list of about 450 employees who volunteer to taste and tell.

The number of people who get into the act each time depends on the research problem—SRS generally picks between 20 and 100 respondents for a problem. Each individual test runs about 15 minutes.

Taste testing can be fun, but it's serious business, and the testers are dedicated people. Not all products are tasty.

The product can turn out to be a dilly or a dud, but the SRS taste tests are the critical first step in many new products' development, laying the ground for the vastly more expensive in-home studies conducted by SRS.

RICE IN 1980

New high-yielding rice varieties and other production improvements that are part of the Green Revolution in less developed countries (LDC's) are apt to shake up the world's rice trade this decade.

At least, that's the opinion of Economic Research Service (ERS) economists who recently projected two possible levels of rice trade for the world in 1980.

High Trade Level:

For this level world rice output in 1980 is forecast at 248 million metric tons—44 percent higher than the average annual output in 1964–66. Much of the global gain is projected to come in the less developed parts of the world—with rice production in LDC importing nations growing at 2.8 percent annually and in exporting countries, 2.5 percent.

While the projected rates of growth are relatively high compared with past trends, they are easily reachable with new rice varieties and modern technologies.

Gains in domestic rice production in LDC importers would probably hold the world's rice trade close to 6.3 million metric tons in 1980, up only moderately from the 1964–66 levels.

While the LDC's are projected to continue as the world's major importers, the ERS economists figure their total rice imports by the end of this decade would be about 4.7 million metric tons.

That is up only slightly from the 4.3 million yearly average of 1964–66.

More than two-thirds of the LDC imports would be supplied by LDC exporters—Thailand, Ceylon, and Cambodia, for example.

Most of the rest of the rice would be supplied by the major exporters in the developed sector: the United States

(top world exporter since 1967), Australia, and Communist Asia.

The shortened import demand in the LDC's would tend to depress the world's rice prices. In fact, the ERS economists see 1980 prices falling a fifth below the relatively high 1964–66 base period but staying close to recent levels.

The price drop, in turn, would likely slow rice production in the developed world, especially in the United States which, with Japan, accounts for 75 percent of the developed sector's rice output.

Consequently, the United States would have to hold its rice production gains to only 1½ percent a year—well below the gains in the last two decades.

The United States could continue to increase its exports to the LDC market—in fact, our exports to these nations may top 2 million metric tons by 1980, a third higher than our average of 1.5 million tons a year during 1964–66.

However, much of the expected market growth is contingent on the availability of concessional trade terms and a limited rate of recovery of rice exports from Southeast Asia.

Low Trade Level:

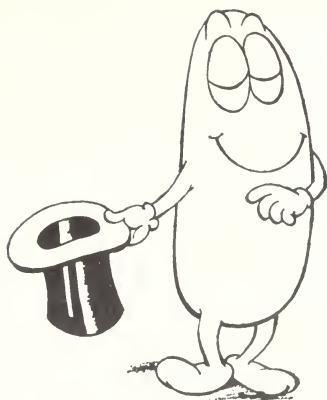
The low trade level projected by ERS economists for 1980 sees LDC importers pushing for gains in domestic rice production of 3.8 percent annually during this decade, while the LDC exporters will strive to up output 3.1 percent a year.

Such rates of growth, if actually achieved, would mean a sharp fall-off in LDC import demand to perhaps under 3.0 million metric tons by 1980. As a result, LDC exporters would have to seek other markets for their expanded export availabilities—projected to be up to 3.9 million tons.

Total world rice trade in 1980 under the low level ERS projection would amount to only about 4.1 million metric tons.

Developed countries would obviously have to reduce their share of exports considerably for world prices to be maintained at reasonable levels.

RIZ LONG GRAIN AMERICAIN



Some might think that sending recipes to French cooks is like sending coals to Newcastle. However, some Americans recently scored a sales success in France by introducing new ways to use rice.

Traditionally rice was used only in French desserts. But, the American Rice Council, in cooperation with USDA's Foreign Agricultural Service, decided to change all that and several years ago began to promote American long grain rice as a vegetable dish in France. They advertised in French women's magazines, distributed recipe books, and had in-store promotions.

Results: Sales of parboiled American long grain rice nearly doubled between 1968 and 1970, increasing from 2,600 to 4,900 metric tons.

In France "riz long American" is associated with parboiled rice—sometimes called easy-to-cook, prefluffed, separate grain, or nonstick. All that is due to a special steam and pressure process applied to the rice before milling.

Higher sales of parboiled rice boosted total French rice consumption 5½ percent from 1968 to 1970. Analysis showed it was the promotion campaign that increased rice use—parboiled in particular.

All, however, was not unmixed commercial joy for the United States producers. While our easy-to-cook rice doubled in use, its market share increased only 10 percent. That's because a French company also came out with a promotional campaign.

The French company managed to increase its sales from 700 metric tons in 1967 to 3,100 in 1970. Its market share rose from 17½ to 30 percent of the parboiled market in 3 years.

Increases in market shares for French and American parboiled rices were at the expense of unidentifiable brands.

RICE NOW

The U.S. rice market is perking up after last year's sluggish pace. Exports and domestic use are rising, bringing a cut in carry-over stocks.

The U.S. rice exports for the marketing year ending July 31 could top by a fourth the 1970/71 total of 46.5 million cwt., and put rice trade at the high 1967-69 levels. Public Law 480 shipments, mostly to South Korea, are behind the upswing. Our commercial exports probably won't match last year's.

The U.S. rice supply had bulged to 104.4 million cwt. in 1971/72, third largest total on record. Fostering the large supply were a carryin last August of 18.6 million cwt., a big production of 84.3 million cwt., and imports.

But the improved prospects for exports and domestic use should reduce stocks to around 11.2 million cwt. this summer.

agoutlook

Digested from outlook reports of the Economic Research Service.
Forecasts based on information available through July 1, 1972

YEAR OF THE RUNNING OVER TROUGH . . . Between October 1, 1971, and September 30, 1972, feed grain use probably will turn out to be 10 to 12 million tons more than the previous year. Domestic feeding will probably swallow most of the increase, reaching an estimated 163 million tons by the end of the year. That's 10% more than domestic feeders used during 1970/71. Exports might run as high as 22 million tons, 8% over the previous year.

●

FEED GRAIN CARRYOVER . . . Prospective feed grain use of almost 186 million tons will leave a carryover into 1972/73 of 53 million tons, some 20 million tons more than a year earlier.

●

EXPORT PULSE . . . The 3.6 million tons of feed grains sold to the USSR accounted for a fifth of all feed grain exports October 1 through April 30. By April 30 almost all of the 85 million bushels of corn sold and around two-thirds of the 24 million bushels of oats were on their way to Russia. Very little of the ordered 39 million tons of barley had been shipped. And . . . the short 1972 Argentine corn crop will mean reduced competition during May–September for U.S. feed grains in international trade.

●

CORN USE April–September 1972 will total around 1.8 billion bushels domestically and around 300 million bushels will be exported. Use for the marketing year may total almost 5 billion bushels. Carryover should stand at around $1\frac{1}{4}$ billion bushels, nearly double a year earlier.

●

SORGHUM USE by feeders and exporters may total around 280 million bushels during April–September, a bit above 1971's second half disappearance. Carryover on October 1 will probably total around 200 million bushels, double that of a year earlier.

WHEAT FEEDING . . . Despite the abundance of corn, wheat feeding during October 1971–September 1972 will probably nearly equal last year's 239 million bushels. While wheat is less competitive with corn this year, it continues quite competitive with grain sorghum and other feed grains. Wheat feeding this year has been especially heavy in Kansas, Oklahoma, Texas, and Colorado.



MORE MILK . . . Dairy men will probably market 1 to 2% more milk during 1972, up from last year's almost 115 billion pounds. Although dairy farmers are culling their herds 1%, they've been feeding liberally due to low feed prices. So far this year, daily milk production per cow has run over 2% above last. Increased marketings, plus a small price rise, should lift cash receipts from dairying to \$7 billion for 1972, up from 1971's \$6.8 billion.



SMILE . . . Dairy sales this year may exceed last year's 109 billion pounds milk equivalent. American and other cheese sales hit 531 million pounds in January–April, topping 1971's first quarter by 13%. Higher meat and fish prices likely contributed to the sales jump. Low-fat milk sales are up about 11%.



EARLY CENSUS RESULTS . . . Based on early data from the 1969 Census of Agriculture, U.S. farm enterprises with milk cows numbered 600,000 in 1969, compared with 1.1 million in 1964. Of the 600,000, about 400,000 farms were selling milk or cream . . . the other third produced only for household consumption.



COTTON ACRES . . . Cotton farmers will probably plant an average 50 acres of upland cotton per farm this year, compared with 1971's 41. At the same time, judging from a 9% decline in signups for the 1972 Upland Cotton Program, fewer farmers are going to produce cotton. Regionally, acreage increases per farm may range from 10% in the Southeast to nearly 30% in the Delta.



COTTON FORECAST . . . If farmers plant the indicated 13½ million acres, up 10% from last year, and abandonment and yields remain near 1968–70 levels, there'll likely be a 12-million-bale cotton harvest this fall, about 2 million over last year. This will adequately cover domestic use and exports, which are estimated to total around this season's level of 11 million bales.

WHAT YOU EAT . . . Americans will eat about the same amount of food on a per capita basis during 1972 as they did in 1971. However, we're liable to be eating a fraction more crop foods and a fraction less animal products, such as milk and butter.

ENTREES . . . A 3 to 4% increase in per capita beef consumption is expected to almost offset declines for veal, pork, and lamb. However, at breakfast besides less bacon, there'll also be fewer eggs. Per capita consumption for 1972 will probably be down slightly.

STATISTICAL BAROMETER

Item	1970	1971	1972—latest data available	
Prices received by farmers (1967=100)	110	113	125	June
Prices paid, interest, taxes, wages rates (1967=100)	114	120	126	June
Ratio ¹ (1967=100)	96	94	99	June
Consumer price index, all items (1967=100)	116	121	125	May
Food (1967=100)	115	118	122	May
Average value of farmland per acre (1967=100)	117	121	130	Mar.
Total value of farm real estate (\$ bil.)	207.1	213.0	228.6	Mar.
Agricultural exports (\$ bil.)	7.2	7.7	0.7	May
Agricultural imports (\$ bil.)	5.7	5.8	0.5	May
Disposable personal income (\$ bil.)	687.8	741.3	765.7	(³)
Expenditures for food (\$ bil.)	114.0	118.3	121.0	(³)
Share of income spent for food (percent)	16.6	16.0	15.8	(³)
Farm food market basket: ²				
Retail cost (\$)	1,223	1,244	1,288	May
Farm value (\$)	476	477	513	May
Farmers' share of retail cost (percent)	39	38	40	May
Realized gross farm income (\$ bil.)	56.6	58.6	62.3	(³)
Production expenses (\$ bil.)	40.9	42.9	44.0	(³)
Realized net farm income (\$ bil.)	15.7	15.7	18.3	(³)

¹ Ratio of index of prices received by farmers to index of prices paid, interest, taxes and farm wages.

² Average annual quantities per family and single person household bought by wage and clerical workers 1960-61, based on Bureau of Labor Statistics figures.

³ Annual rate, seasonally adjusted, first quarter.

Weather & Crop Service



1872·Centennial·1972

**U.S. Department of Commerce
U.S. Department of Agriculture**

Freezes, floods, droughts, or downpours in farming areas can have a major economic impact on the area and may affect U.S. food and fiber production and prices.

These facts were realized way back when weather reporting in this country was in its infancy—and explains why the fledgling National Weather Service (as part of the Army's Signal Corps) started publishing reports on weather and its impact on agriculture as long ago as 1872.

This year weather and crop service to agriculture swings into its second century—now a joint effort of USDA's Statistical Reporting Service and the Department of Commerce's National Oceanic and Atmospheric Adminis-

tration (NOAA, formerly the Weather Bureau).

The importance of the service is perhaps even more readily acknowledged now than when it started. In today's highly specialized farming setup, an overview of weather's impact on the whole of U.S. agriculture is crucial to farmers, marketers, and consumers alike.

USDA and the Commerce Department pull together information for a weekly Weather and Crop Bulletin. Volunteer crop reporters and weather observers and Cooperative Extension Service agents supply the facts that are routed through NOAA's local weather stations and SRS State offices. The information is analyzed and becomes official State, regional, and national weather wrap-ups used by broadcasters and newspapers in farming areas.

This service helps farmers throughout the Nation "live with" their most uncertain agricultural input—the weather.

To mark the 100th birthday of the Weather and Crop Service, we'll reverse the standard procedure and send a birthday card to any volunteer crop reporter, official weather observer, or county agent.

Actually, our "card" is an 18- by 24-inch poster that looks like the art atop this story. If you would like to display the poster as a part of the national observation, we will be glad to send you a free copy. Send a postcard to: Poster, Agricultural Situation, OMS-DI, USDA, Washington, D.C. 20250. Please include your ZIP code.

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Editor: Geraldine Schumacher

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